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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0457  
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1865  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 8886  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7125  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5102  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3259  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5058  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1337  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0595  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4168  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9465  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6766  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 1264  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3696  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000848

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: CLERGY IDPS RELEASED, DOCTORS OUT ON BAIL - IS  
THIS A TREND?

REF: A. A) COLOMBO 830

[1](#)B. B) COLOMBO 695

[1](#)C. C) 2008 COLOMBO 1117

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES REBECCA W. COHN. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) On August 27, the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) announced it was releasing 579 clergy members from the IDP camps in Vavuniya. Media reports said 571 of these were Hindu priests, with six Catholic priests and two nuns joining them. These same reports said approximately 220 clergy members remained in the camps.

[1](#)2. (C) As reported in reftel A, the four government doctors held since the end of the war for questioning about the statements they made during the last months of the conflict were released on bail earlier this week. The doctors are still under investigation, must check in monthly with the Criminal Investigation Division (CID), and have a court date in November. Reports have said they contacted the Ministry of Health, their employer while in the North during the war, to discuss reassignment now that they have been released. They were reportedly asked to work in the Vavuniya region.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Post has noted as well a recent spike in high profile arrests of police involved in violent incidents against civilians. In one instance two young men were shot and killed by police in a Colombo suburb. In another instance, the wife of the Senior Superintendent of Police, Colombo Crime Division, was accused of physically assaulting and seriously injuring her son's classmate. In the past we would have expected a long, drawn-out process of investigation and administrative inaction for such cases, ending in dismissal of the case or exoneration of the officials involved. Now however, 11 police officers allegedly involved in the killing of the two youths have been jailed pending further investigation, and the wife of the Senior Superintendent was summarily carted off to jail in full view of the media.

[1](#)4. (C) We will be watching closely on August 31 for the

results of the court trial of journalist Tissainayagam (ref C). The judge is expected to announce her verdict and any prison sentence if Tissainayagam is convicted. Embassy contacts believe the judge is close to President Rajapaksa and will deliver whatever verdict and/or sentence he requests of her.

COMMENT

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15. (C) While it is early to say definitively, a pattern of releasing key detainees and high profile prosecutions of police abuse may be developing. We suspect these moves may be an effort by the GSL to put a good face forward in the lead-up to the United Nations General Assembly meetings in late September and in advance of the EU decision on extending GSP tariff rates expected in October. We will continue to monitor this possible trend very closely. END COMMENT.  
COHN